

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASH DC 6258

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMNASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8958

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MILI CH

SUBJECT: WANG HUNG-WEN'S MILITARY COMMISSION TITLE DROPPED

REF: HONG KONG 8868 (NOTAL)

1. NCNA REPORTING OF THE SHANGHAI ARMY DAY APPEARANCE OF PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN WANG HUNG-WEN WITH THE TITLE OF VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMISSION (MC) HAS PRODUCED AN INTERESTING ANOMALY IN THE PRC COVERAGE OF THE EVENT (REFTEL). FIRST NCNA DOMESTIC AND THEN NCNA ENGLISH ON JULY 31 CARRIED THE STORY OF ARMY DAY CELEBRATION IDENTIFYING WANG WITH THE MC TITLE. BUT ON AUGUST 1, NCNA ENGLISH, WITHOUT ISSUING ANY CORRECTION OR SERVICE MESSAGES REQUESTING DELETION REPLYING THE ENTIRE STORY AND OMITTED THAT TITLE FOR WANG. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORTS HERE, THE AUGUST 1, PEOPLE'S DAILY DID NOT CARRY THE IDENTIFICATION. SELECTIVE EXAMINATION OF PROVINCIAL

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BROADCASTING, WHICH REPEATED THE STORY ON THEIR OWN NEWS

PROGRAMMING ALSO FAILED TO TURN UP ANY MENTION OF WANG WITH THE MC TITLE. AMONG HK PRC CONTROLLED PAPERS, WEN WEI PAO AND TA KUNG PAO DID NOT CARRY THE STORY AT ALL, BUT HSIN WAN PAO PLAYED THE STORY ACCORDING TO THE ORIGINAL IDENTIFICATION WITH THE MC TITLE.

2. COMMENTS: PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION OF MC MEMBERS HAS BEEN RELATIVELY RARE- ONLY THREE MEMBERS HAVE BEEN SO IDENTIFIED SINCE THE NPC-AND WANG HAS NEVER OFFICIALLY BEEN GIVEN THAT TITLE, DESPITE NUMEROUS REPORTS FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN AND INTELLIGENCE SOURCES THAT HE IS INDEED A VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION. NCNA CLEARLY DID NOT WANT TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE CHANGE BY ISSUING A CORRECTION TO ITS ORIGINAL RELEASE, BUT CONSIDERED THE MATTER OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO REPEAT THE STORY WITH THE CHANGE.

3. GIVEN THE HEAVY MILITARY FOCUS OF THE CELEBRATION, PEKING SIMPLY MAY NOT HAVE WISHED TO ACCORD SUCH PROMINENCE TO WANG WHO IS PRINCIPALLY IDENTIFIED WITH PAST AFFAIRS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS ANOMALY PLUS THE FACT THAT WANG APPEARED IN HIS HOME BASE OF SHANGHAI RATHER THAN IN THE CAPITAL SUGGEST WE SHOULD KEEP A SHARP EYE ON HIS PRESENT ROLE.
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